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TELEGRAMS IN ADVANCE.

No. 205.

## THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN.

### A Strange Story of Texas.

BY CAPTAIN MAYNE REID.



Headless of the affrighted deer—either of its presence or precipitate flight—the Headless Horseman rides on.

sun is shedding his beams from a sky of cerulean brightness. Under the golden light appears a portion of his figure: his limbs incased in "water-guard" of jaguar-skin, thus sufficiently sheltered against the dews of the night, or the showers of a tropical sky, he rides on—silent as the stars shining above, unconcerned as the coda that chirrups in the grass beneath, or the prairie breeze playing with the drapery of his dress.

He

appears to be under the influence of some all-absorbing emotion, from which no common incident can awaken him. There is no speech—not a whisper—to betray its nature. The startled stag, his own horse, the wolf, and the midnight moon are the sole witnesses of his silent abstraction.

His shoulders shrouded under a *serape*, one edge of which, flattered by the wind, displays a portion of his figure: his limbs incased in "water-guard" of jaguar-skin, thus sufficiently sheltered against the dews of the night, or the showers of a tropical sky, he rides on—silent as the stars shining above, unconcerned as the coda that chirrups in the grass beneath, or the prairie breeze playing with the drapery of his dress.

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as it raged among the ripe grass, has eliminated the impression of the wheels hitherto indicating the route.

"What are we to do?"

The planter himself put this inquiry, in a tone that told of a vacillating spirit.

"Do, uncle Woodley! What else but keep straight on? The river must be on the other side? If we don't hit the crossing, to a half-mile or so, we can go up or down the bank—as the case may require."

"But, Cassius, if we should lose our way?"

"We can't. There's but a patch of this, I suppose? If we do go a little astray, we must come out somewhere—on one side, or the other."

"Well, nephew, you know best: I shall be guided by you."

"No fear, uncle. I've made my way out of a worse fix than this. Drive on, niggers! Keep straight after me."

The ex-officer of volunteers, casting a concealed glance toward the traveling carriage—through the curtains of which appears a fair face, slightly shadowed with anxiety—gives the spur to his horse; and with confident air trots onward.

A chorus of whip-cracks is succeeded by the trampling of four-score mules, mingled with the clanking of wheels against their hubs. The wagon-train is once more in motion.

The mules step out with greater rapidity. The sable surface, strange to their eyes, excites them to brisker action—causing them to raise the hoof as soon as it touches the turf. The young animals show fear—snorting as they advance.

In time their apprehensions become allayed; and, taking their cue from their older associates, they move on steadily as before.

A mile or more is made, apparently in a direct line from the point of starting. Then there is a halt. The self-appointed guide has ordered it. He has reined up his horse; and is sitting in the saddle with less show of confidence. He appears to be puzzled about the direction.

The landscape—if such it may be called—has assumed a change; though not for the better. It is still as ever to the verge of the horizon. But the surface is no longer a plain: it rolls. There are ridges—gentle undulations—with valleys between. They are not entirely treeless—though nothing that may be termed a tree is in sight. There have been such before the fire—*agave*, *mezquites*, and others of the *acacia* family—standing solitary or in copses. Their light pinnate foliage has disappeared like flux before the flame. Their existence is only evidenced by charred trunks and blackened boughs.

"You've lost the way, nephew?" said the planter, riding rapidly up.

"No, uncle—not yet. I've only stopped to have a look. It must lie in this direction—down that valley. Let them drive on. We're going all right—I'll answer for that."

One more in motion—down the slope—then along the valley—then up the acclivity of another ridge—and then there is a second stoppage upon its crest.

"You've lost the way, Cash?" said the planter, coming up and repeating his former observation.

"Durned if I don't believe I have, uncle!" responded the nephew, in a tone of not very respectful mistrust. "Anyhow, who the deuce could find his way out of an aspith like this? No, no," he continued, reluctant to betray his embarrassment, as the carriage came up. "I see now. We are all right. The river must be in this direction."

On goes the guide, evidently irresolute. On follow the sable teamsters, who despite their stolidity, do not fail to note some of the vacillation. They can tell that they are no longer advancing in a direct line; but circuitously among the copses, and across the glades that stretch between.

All are gratified by a shout from the conductor, announcing recovered confidence. In response there is a universal explosion of whizcord, with joyous exclamations.

Once more they are stretching their teams along a traveled road—where a half-score of wheeled vehicles must have passed before them. And not long before: the wheel-tracks are of recent impress—the hoof-prints of the animals fresh as if made within the hour. A train of wagons, not unlike their own, must have passed over the burnt prairie!

Like themselves, it could only be going toward the Leona; perhaps some government convoy on its way to Fort Ingé? In that case they have only to keep in the same track. The fort is on the line of their march—but a short distance beyond the point where their journey is to terminate.

Nothing could be more opportune. The guide, hitherto perplexed—though without acknowledging it—is at once relieved of all anxiety; and with a fresh exhibition of conceit, orders the route to be resumed.

For a mile or more the wagon-tracks are followed—not in a direct line, but bending about among the skeleton copses. The countenance of Cassius Calhoun, for a while wearing a confident look, gradually becomes clouded. It assumes the profoundest expression of despondency, on discovering that the four and forty wheel-tracks he is following have been made by ten Pittsburgh wagons and a carriage—the same that are now following him, and in whose company he has been traveling *all the way from Matagorda!*

## CHAPTER II.

### THE TRAIL OF THE LAZO.

Beyond doubt the wagons of Woodley Poindester were going over ground already traced by the tiring of their wheels.

"Our own tracks!" muttered Calhoun on making the discovery, adding a fierce oath as he reined up.

"Our own tracks! What mean you, Cassius? You don't say we've been traveling?"

"On our own tracks, I say, uncle; that very thing. We must have made a complete circumlocution of it. See! here's the hind hoof of my horse, with half shoe off; and there's the feet of the niggers. Besides, I can tell the ground. That's the very hill we went down as we left our last stopping-place. Hang the crooked luck! We've made a couple of miles for nothing."

Embarrassment is no longer the only expression upon the face of the speaker. It has deepened to chagrin, with an admixture of shame. It is through him that the train is without a regular guide. One, engaged at Indianola, had piloted them to their last camping-place. There, in consequence of some dispute, due to the surly temper of the ex-captain of volunteers, the man had demanded his dismissal and gone back.

For this—as also for an ill-timed display of confidence in his power to conduct the march—is the planter's nephew now suffering under a sense of shame. He feels it keenly as the carriage comes up, and bright eyes become wistful of his discomfiture.

Poindester does not repeat his inquiry. That the road is lost is a fact evident to all. Even the barefooted or "brogammed" pedestrians have recognized their long-heeled footprints,

and become aware that they are for the second time treading upon the same ground.

There is a general halt, succeeded by an animated conversation among the white men. The situation is serious: the planter himself believes it to be so. He can not that day reach the end of his journey—a thing upon which he had set his mind.

That is the very least misfortune that can befall them. There are others possible and probable. There are perils upon the burned plain. They may be compelled to spend the night upon it, with no water for their animals. Perhaps a second day and night—or longer—who can tell how long?

How are they to find their way? The sun is beginning to descend; though still too high in heaven to indicate his line of declination. By waiting awhile they may discover the quarter of a compass.

But to what purpose? The knowledge of east, west, north and south, can avail nothing now: they have lost their *line of march*.

Calhoun has become cautious. He no longer volunteers to point out the path. He hesitates to repeat his pioneering experiments—after such manifest and shameful failure.

A ten minutes' discussion ends in nothing. No one can suggest a feasible plan of proceeding. No one knows how to escape from the embrace of that dark desert, which appears to cloud not only the sun and sky, but the countenances of all who enter within its limits.

A flock of black vultures is seen flying afar off. They come nearer and nearer. Some alight upon the ground—others hover above the heads of the strayed travelers. Is there a boding in the behavior of the birds?

Another ten minutes is spent in the midst of moral and physical gloom. Then, as if by a benignant mandate from heaven, does cheerfulness reassume its sway. The cause? A horseman riding in the direction of the train!

An unexpected sight: who could have looked for human being in such a place? All eyes simultaneously sparkle with joy; as if in the approach of the horseman, they beheld the advent of a savior!

"He's coming this way, is he not?" inquired the planter, scarce confident in his failing sight.

"Yes, father; straight as he can ride," replied Henry, lifting the hat from his head, and waving it on high: the action accompanied by a shout intended to attract the horseman.

The signal was superfluous. The stranger had already sighted the halted wagons; and, riding toward them at a gallop, was soon within speaking distance.

He did not draw bridle until he had passed the train; and arrived upon the spot occupied by the planter and his party.

"A Mexican!" whispered Henry, drawing his deduction from the habiliments of the horseman.

"So much the better," replied Poindester, in the same tone of voice; he'll be all the more likely to know the road."

"Not a bit of Mexican about him," muttered Calhoun, "excepting the rig. I'll soon see. *Buenos días, caballero!* *Está V. Mexican!* (Good-day, sir! are you a Mexican?)

"No, indeed," replied the stranger, with a protesting smile. "Anything but that. I can speak to you in Spanish, if you prefer it; but I daresay you will understand me better in English: which, I presume, is your native tongue?"

Calhoun, suspecting that he had spoken in different Spanish, or indifferently pronounced it, refrains from making rejoinder.

"American, sir," replied Poindester, his natural pride feeling slightly piqued. Then, as if fearing to offend the man from whom he intended asking a favor, he added: "Yes, sir; we are all Americans—from the *Southern States*."

"That I can perceive by your following." An expression of contempt—scarce perceptible—showed itself upon the countenance of the speaker, as his eye rested upon the groups of black bondsmen. "I can perceive, too," he added, "that you are strangers to prairie traveling. You have lost your way?"

"We have, sir; and have very little prospect of recovering it, unless we may count upon your kindness to direct us."

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"Giants, or ghouls!" jokingly suggested Calhoun; "ogres from some other world, who've taken a fancy to have a promenade on this abominable prairie!"

The ex-officer was only humorous with an effort. As well as the others, he was under the influence of an uneasy feeling.

And no wonder. Against the northern horizon had suddenly become upreared a number of ink-colored columns—half-a-score of them—unlike any thing ever seen before. They were not of regular columnar form, nor fixed in any way; but constantly changing size, shape and place—now steadfast for a time—now gliding over the charred surface like giants upon skates—anon bending and balancing toward one another in the most fantastic figurings!

It required no great effort of imagination to fancy the Titans of old, resuscitated on the prairies of Texas, leading a measure after some wild carousal in the company of Bacchus!

In the proximity of phenomena never observed before—unearthly in their aspect—unknown to every individual of the party—it was but natural these should be inspired with alarm.

And such was the fact. A sense of danger pervaded every bosom. All were impressed with a belief: that they were in the presence of some peril of the prairies.

A general halt had been made on first observing the strange object: the negroes on foot, as well as the teamsters, giving utterance to shouts of terror. The animals—mules as well as horses, had come instinctively to a stand—the latter neighing and trembling—the former filling the air with their shrill screams!

These noises were gradually growing louder and more distinct. The danger, whatever it might be, was drawing nearer!

Consternation became depicted on the countenances of the travelers, Calhoun's form no exception. The ex-officer no longer pretended levity. The eyes of all were turned toward the lowering sky, and the band of black columns that appeared to be coming on to crush them!

At this crisis a shout, reaching their ears from the opposite side, was a source of relief—despite the unmistakable accent of alarm in which it was uttered.

Turning, they beheld a horseman in full gallop—riding direct toward them.

The horse was black as coal: the rider of like hue, even to the skin of his face. For all that he was recognized: as the stranger, upon the trail of whose lazo they had been traveling.

The perceptions of woman are quicker than those of man: the young lady within the carriage was the first to identify him.

"Onward!" he cried, as soon as within speaking distance. "On—on I fast as you can drive!"

"What is it?" demanded the planter, in bewilderment. "Is there a danger?"

"There is. I did not anticipate it, as I passed you. It was only after reaching the river I saw the sure signs of it."

"Of what, sir?"

"The norther."

"You mean the storm of that name?"

"I do."

"I never heard of its being dangerous," interposed Calhoun, "except to vessels at sea. It's precious cold, I know; but—"

"You'll find it worse than 'cold, sir,'" interrupted the young horseman, "if you're not quick in getting out of its way. Mr. Pindexter," he continued, turning to the planter, and speaking with impatient emphasis, "I tell you that you and your party are in peril. A norther is not always to be dreaded; but this one—look wonder! You see those black pillars?"

"We've been wondering—didn't know what to make of them."

"They're nothing—only the precursors of the storm. Look beyond! Don't you see a coal black cloud spreading over the sky? That's what you have to dread. I don't wish to cause you unnecessary alarm; but I tell you there's death in yonder shadow! It's in motion, and coming this way. You have no chance to escape, except by speed. If you do not make haste, it will be too late. In ten minutes time you may be enveloped, and then—quick, sir, I entreat you! Order your drivers to hurry for ward as fast as they can! The sky—heaven itself—commands you!"

The planter did not think of refusing compliance, with an appeal urged in such energetic terms. The order was given for the teams to be set in motion, and driven at top speed.

Terror, that inspired the animals equally with their drivers, rendered superfluous the use of the whip.

The traveling carriage, with the mounted men, moved in front, as before. The stranger alone threw himself in the rear—as if to act as a guard against the threatening danger.

At intervals he was observed to rein up his horse, and look back: each time by his glances betraying increased apprehension.

Perceiving it, the planter approached, and accosted him with the inquiry:

"Is there still a danger?"

"I am sorry to answer you in the affirmative," said he: "I had hopes that the wind might be the other way."

"Wind, sir? There is none that I can perceive."

"Not here. Yonder it is blowing a hurricane, and this way too—direct. By heavens! it is nearing us rapidly! I doubt if we shall be able to clear the burnt track."

"What is to be done?" exclaimed the planter, mystified by the announcement.

"Are your mules doing their best?"

"They are: they could not be driven faster."

"I fear we shall be too late, then!"

As the speaker gave utterance to this gloomy conjecture, he remeasured once more, and sat regarding the cloud columns—as if calculating the rate at which they were advancing.

The lines, contracting around his lips, told of something more than dissatisfaction.

"Yes: too late!" he exclaimed, suddenly terminating his scrutiny. "They are moving faster than we—far faster. There is no hope of our escaping them!"

"Good God, sir! is the danger so great? Can we do nothing to avoid it?"

The stranger did not make immediate reply. For some seconds he remained silent, as if reflecting—his glance no longer turned toward the sky, but wandering among the wagons.

"Is there no chance of escape?" urged the planter, with the impatience of a man in presence of a great peril.

"There is!" joyfully responded the horseman, as if some hopeful thought had at length suggested itself. "There is a chance. I did not think of it before. We cannot shrug the storm—the danger we may. Quick, Mr. Pindexter! Order your men to muffle the mules—

the horses too—otherwise the animals will be blinded, and go mad. Blankets—cloaks—anything will do. When that's done, let all seek shelter within the wagons. Let the tilts be closed at the ends. I shall myself look to the traveling carriage."

"Maurice the mustanger! despite your sooty covering—despite your modest pretense—you

Having delivered this chapter of instructions

—which Pindexter, assisted by the overseers, hastened to direct the execution of—the young horseman galloped toward the front.

"Madame!" said he, reining up alongside the carriage, and speaking with as much suavity as the circumstances would admit of, "you must close the curtains all round. Your couchman will have to get inside; and you, gentlemen!" he continued, addressing himself to Henry and Calhoun—"and you, sir!" to Pindexter, who had just come up. "There will be room for all. Inside, I beseech you! Loss no time. In a few seconds the storm will be upon us!"

"And you, sir?" inquired the planter, with a show of interest in the man who was making such exertions to secure them against some yet unascertained danger. "What of yourself?"

"Don't waste a moment upon me. I know what's coming. It isn't the first time I have encountered it. In—in I entreat you! You have a second to spare. Listen to that shriek! Quick, or the dust-cloud will be around us!"

The planter and his son sprung together to the ground; and retreated into the traveling carriage.

Calhoun, refusing to dismount, remained stiffly seated in his saddle. Why should he skulk from a visionary danger, that did not detect a man in Mexican garb?

The latter turned away; as he did so, directing the overseer to get inside the nearest wagon—a direction which was obeyed with alacrity—and, for the first time, the stranger was left free to take care of himself.

Quickly unfolding his *serape*—litherto strapped across the cantle of his saddle—he flung it over the head of his horse. Then drawing the edges back, he fastened it, bag fashion, around the animal's neck. With equal alertness he undid his scarf of China cravat; and stretched it around his sombrero—fixing it in such a way, that one edge was held under the bullion band, while the other dropped over the brim—thus forming a silken visor for his face.

Before finally closing it, he turned once more toward the carriage; and, to his surprise, saw Calhoun still in the saddle. Humanity triumphed over a feeling of incipient aversion.

"Once again, sir, I adjure you to get inside! If you do not you'll have cause to repent it. Within ten minutes' time, you may be a dead man!"

The positive emphasis with which the caution was delivered produced its effect. In the presence of a mortal foeman, Cassius Calhoun was no coward. But there was an enemy approaching that was not mortal—not in any way understood. It was already making itself manifest, in those that resembled thunder—in shadows that mocked the darkness of midnight. Who would not have felt fear at the approach of a destroyer so declaring itself?

The ex-officer was unable to resist the united warnings of earth and heaven; and, slipping out of his saddle with a show of reluctance—intended to save appearances—he clambered into the carriage, and ensconced himself behind the closely drawn curtains.

To describe what followed is beyond the power of the pen. No eye beheld the spectacle; for none dared look upon it. Even had this been possible, nothing could have been seen. In five minutes after the muffling of the mules, the train was enveloped in worse than Cimmerian darkness.

The opening scene can alone be depicted: for that only was observed by the travelers. One of the sable columns, moving in the advance, broke as it came in collision with the wagon-tents. Down came a shower of black dust, as if the sky had commence raining gunpowder! It was a foretaste of what was to follow.

There was a short interval of open atmosphere—hot as the inside of an oven. Then succeeded puffs, and whirling gusts, of wind—cold as if projected from caves of ice, and accompanied by a noise as though all the trumpets of Eolus were announcing the advent of a storm-king!

In another instant the norther was around them; and the wagon train, halted on a sub-tropical plain, was enveloped in an atmosphere, akin to that which conceals the icebergs of the Arctic Ocean!

Nothing more was seen—nothing heard, save the whistling of the wind, or its hoarse roaring, as it thundered against the tilts of the wagons. The mules having instinctively turned stern toward it, stood silent in the traces; and the voices of the travelers, in solemn converse inside, could not be distinguished amid the howling of the hurricane.

Every aperture had been closed, for it was soon discovered, that to show a face from under the sheltered canvas was to court suffocation. The air was surcharged with ashes, lifted aloft from the burnt plain, and reduced by the whirling of the wind, to an impalpable, but poisonous powder.

For over an hour did the atmosphere carry this cimerous cloud; during which period lasted the imprisonment of the travelers.

At length a voice, speaking close by the curtains of the carriage, announced their release.

"You can come forth!" said the stranger, the crêpe scarf thrown back above the brim of his hat. "You will still have the storm to contend against. It will last to the end of your journey; and, perhaps, for three days longer. But you have nothing further to fear. The ashes are all swept off. They've gone before you, and you're not likely to overtake them out of the Rio Grande."

"Sir!" said the planter, hastily descending the steps of the carriage, "we have to thank you for—that for—for—"

"There was something in the guide's voice, as well as his looks, that struck Margery as being a little singular: but unsophisticated as she was in the Indian character, she failed to read the hidden meaning of the scout's permission, and eager to be with Hellice, she expressed an earnest desire to accompany her and the Indian. Her father, however, objected to this, but when Calhoun expressed himself in favor of her going, for the reason that, by going by two, the time of getting all from the fort would be shortened one-half, the colonel gave way and his daughter departed with the guide and Calhoun.

Calhoun's course was soon decided upon. The spring that welled from the center of the inclosure had worn a deep channel down across the open court, under the edge of the fort, and on down the hill to where it emptied into a nameless creek. The edges of this channel were fringed with weeds and bushes which formed an archway of foliage. Along this the red guide was to conduct the fugitives, trusting to the ripple of the water over the stony bed to drown all sounds that might be made in its transit.

When all was ready for departure, the question arose as to which of the females should go first. This, however, was soon settled by the brave and peerless Hellice Arvine, who expressed her desire and willingness to depart with Calhoun to the designated point of meeting outside of the fortress.

In a minute all was ready, and as they turned to leave, Calhoun approached Margery Bliss, who stood a little to one side and said:

"Margery go too, if want to."

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# THE SATURDAY STAR JOURNAL

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## SUNRISE AND SUNSET:

As viewed in the Tropical Seas.

BY CHARLES OLIVANT.

How beautiful 'tis to behold  
His pathway bathed in lambent gold,  
The sun his daily course keep,  
Rising from out the stormy deep,  
The ocean of the tropic world,  
Where day is rarely seen unfurled.

Then up into the heavens wheel,  
Causing the mind of man to feel  
How vain it is to try to read  
The secret of the world, God's creed—  
The mystic love yet unexpressed  
In palace, cot, or tented field.

How beautiful it is to see  
The sun dip in the purple sea;  
As slowly rolling down the west  
A gorseous pillows to his rest;  
Tinting the clouds with colors bright,  
Ere last on Earth the shades of night.

Then with a flicker and a blaze  
Vanish from our wondering gaze,  
Thoughts which soar, and try to span  
The boundless Universe, oh, Lord,  
And pierce the mysteries of Thy word.

## Gentleman George:

OR,  
PARLOR, PRISON, STAGE AND STREET.

### A STRANGE ROMANCE OF NEW YORK LIFE.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.

AUTHOR OF "THE MAN-FROM-TEXAS," "MAD DETECTIVE,"  
"BOGIE MOUNTAIN RUM," "WOLF DEMON," "OVER  
LAND KIT," "RED MAZEPA," "AGE OF  
READES," "HEART OF FIRE," ETC.

### CHAPTER XXIX.

THE TRIAL.

In just two weeks from the day of Gentleman George's arrest his trial came. His lawyer, the ponderous Three-Decker, had vainly tried to stave off the trial, but the officers of the law, urged on by a healthy public sentiment manifested by the newspaper clamor for justice, pressed the case to an early hearing, and so Gentleman George was produced in open court to answer the law that he had outraged.

The doctors who attended to the wounded policeman, struck down by the ball of the river plunders, testified as to the nature of the hurt that the officer had received, and stated, too, that even now the recovery of the man was a matter of doubt; that the chances for life were fully even with the chances for death.

Then the policemen who were with the wounded man in the boat were placed upon the stand, one by one, and testified as to the manner in which the wounded man had received his hurt. So far this was but the usual course and routine of the legal machinery, and implicated no one as being the author of the outrage. Then Mickey Shea took the stand and told a plain, straightforward story as to the work of the night when the rats of the river had relieved the British captain of the Golden Dragon of his diamond charge. He told how he had been enticed into joining the river thieves by the prisoner at the bar, Gentleman George, as he was nicknamed, or George Dominick, as he should be called; how in a moment of weakness, he had yielded to the temptation and had joined Dominick and his companions in their raid upon the Liverpool liner. He then described embarking in a boat at the foot of Market street with the masked men—how they had given him a mask, and he had placed it over his face in obedience to their instructions. Then they had pulled out into the stream and headed straight for the vessel swinging at its anchors off the Battery. Plainly and tersely Mickey related how they had ascended the side of the ship, and, descending into the cabin, had robbed the Briton of the diamond jewelry intrusted to his care. After that, descending to their boat again, Mickey and his companions had pulled off quite leisurely, until the police-boat had given chase; then he described how Dominick, the leader of the party, finding that the police-boat was gaining upon them, had deliberately leveled his revolver at the officers and fired; and further testified that he had heard a groan come from the police-boat and had seen one of the officers drop his oar and fall, evidently wounded by the pistol-shot of Dominick.

Mickey's evidence was direct and delivered without hesitation. It would have been much more likely to carry conviction if Shea had been a better looking man, but the contrast between the witness in the box, swearing a man's life away, and the prisoner at the bar, with the prospect of ten or twenty years in the State Prison before him, was great indeed.

Mickey Shea, a red-faced, bullet-headed fellow, with evil eyes, and the impress of the rough and shoulder-hitter stamped indelibly upon him, was just the opposite of George Dominick—Gentleman George—with his pale, delicate face and gentlemanly bearing; the contrast rendered still more marked by the unusual pallor of George's face, caused by the suffering and loss of blood entailed by his wound.

And near the prisoner, too, sat his wife, pale and evidently deeply agitated. This was a device of the astute Three-Decker, who fully understood what effect the pale and anxious face of a pretty woman would have upon the tender susceptibilities of an average juryman.

Mickey's evidence closed the first day's proceedings.

Vainly Counselor Watt had pleaded that the case might be put off until Captain Drummond, the commander of the Golden Dragon, could be summoned from Europe to give his evidence in the case, but the Judge, rightly understanding it was for the purpose of gaining time alone that the motion had been made, quietly denied it, and decided that the trial must go on.

Just a single glance the Three-Decker cast around the court, but in the glance he fully expressed the opinion that there was no justice for his client in that court; then he sat down and gathered up his papers, apparently in deep despair. This was all done for effect, of course.

Among the spectators in the court-room was Nicholas Bruyn. It was not often that the ex-Judge troubled himself to attend a criminal trial unless he was personally concerned in it, but he felt a strange curiosity to see the desperado who had been honored with the friendship of the pretty Miss Desmond.

Bruyn was considerably astonished at the appearance of the prisoner, and what still more astonished him, as he got a good look at the pale and handsome face of Gentleman George, was the impression which took possession of him, that at some previous time he had seen a face which resembled the face of the man in the prisoner's dock with an almost life-long imprisonment staring him in the face.

The more Nicholas Bruyn looked at the prisoner the more he became convinced that somewhere he had seen the face before.

And then the ex-Judge went back over his past life and tried to remember when and where he had met Gentleman George. But the effort was a failure, and Bruyn possessed a

wonderful memory, too—a fact that many a criminal had cause to remember when Nicholas Bruyn had sat in judgment.

"I am sure that I have met this fellow somewhere," the Judge muttered, impatiently, amazed that he could not "place" the face. "But where?—that is the rub. I wonder if he has ever been through my hands? It is not often that a face escapes me, and I am sure I have seen this one before; the eyes and hair, the peculiar shape of the face; oh, no! there is no mistake. I have met this gentleman, but hang me if I can remember the circumstances."

Then the Judge suddenly remembered that during his political career he had been obliged for a brief period to associate with some very peculiar people, for politics, like misery, makes strange bed-fellows, and the thought occurred that, possibly at some caucus or primary election of the untrified, he had encountered Gentleman George.

With this solution the Judge was fain to be satisfied. He remained throughout the trial, for he had taken quite an interest in the proceedings, and when he thought of Ellen Desmond, the actress, in connection with the man on trial for a deadly assault, he came quite quickly to the conclusion that it was as well that the handsome face and form of Gentleman George should adorn the corridors and workshops of Sing Sing Prison.

The Judge fully understood the interest that a face like George Dominick's would naturally excite in a susceptible female heart, and really was afraid that the society brigand would prove a dangerous rival should he choose to enter the lists and contest for the love of the pretty actress!

"The fellow is just what I was twenty-five or thirty years ago," the Judge thought, as he left the court-room, "and a woman is sometimes fool enough to prefer an adroit scoundrel to a man a little advanced in years, even if he has money at his back."

Bruyn went straight down to his office in Wall street. He was pretty deeply engaged in some large real-estate speculations, and still retained his office although he had almost given up legal practice.

Receiving his morning mail from the clerk, he passed into the inner office, his *sanctum*, and began to peruse his letters. He was interrupted, after ten or fifteen minutes, by the clerk, who informed him that a deputation of gentlemen wished to see him in the outer room.

Proceeding thither, Bruyn saw at a glance that his visitors were nearly all officers of the metropolitan police—that is, all that he knew of the party were. They were in plain clothes now, and evidently off duty.

"Good-day, Judge," said one of the gentlemen, who stood in advance of the rest, and had apparently been deputed to act as spokesman for the rest.

"Good-day, gentlemen," the Judge replied, with an inquiring glance as though with an intent to ask the reason of their visit.

"Judge, you must excuse our calling upon you about a little legal business; but we thought that possibly we might get you to undertake our case, although we understood that you do not practice much at present. But, Judge, we're all of us from your district, and have backed you up good and strong when things were mighty close on election-day," said the spokesman of the party.

"I know that, gentlemen," the Judge replied. "I don't forget my friends; what do you want?"

"Mort Burke is dead—killed by George Dominick, and we want you to go in and help the District Attorney to swing this Gentleman George."

### CHAPTER XXX.

#### GUILTY OR NOT GUILTY.

THE announcement of the death of the wounded policeman naturally created quite a deal of talk among those who had taken an interest in the trial of Gentleman George, and the interest created was not at all allayed when it was publicly reported that the eminent lawyer, Judge Bruyn, would give his services to the prosecution. Of course people naturally understood that the Judge had been retained by the friends of the murdered man, eager for justice upon the slayer.

Counselor Watt, the Three-Decker, seated in his office, within the shadows of the gloomy walls, known as the Tombs, gave a start of astonishment when he read the intelligence in a morning newspaper, that Nicholas Bruyn would assist the District Attorney in the trial of George Dominick.

The counselor was annoyed and disgusted.

"The case is bad enough as it is without having to fight half a dozen lawyers," he muttered, discontentedly.

The Three-Decker had met Judge Bruyn before, and feared his power over a jury. As well as any other living man who followed the law for a trade did the astute counselor know the weight of plausible appeal to the twelve men, "good and true"—whom the newspapers generally playfully designate as the twelve idiots within whose hands the fate of a prisoner rests.

Judge Bruyn's great power as a lawyer lay in his spacious oratory.

The death of the wounded man who had been stricken down in the discharge of his duty by the bullet of the river-thief, naturally made quite a difference in the manner of conducting the trial. The coroner's jury had first to return their verdict. The proceedings were hurried through with railroad-like rapidity, despite the efforts of Counselor Watt to retard the progress, and within a week George Dominick stood duly accused before the bar of justice.

Then came the fight over the selection of a jury to try the case, in which the Three-Decker manfully contested the putting of any man on the jury who had ever read any newspaper account of the case, or who looked as if he possessed sense enough to keep himself out of the insane asylum. But all mortal things must have an end, and the jury was at last impaneled.

The counselor was not at all satisfied when the jury took their seats on the opening day of the trial, and he got a good look at them. It was a pretty fair-looking jury, as juries go, and the Three-Decker saw to his dismay that three or four men in the box really looked as if they possessed an average amount of common sense, and to the mind of the notorious criminal lawyer, common sense was a most dangerous thing to be possessed by a juryman.

The jury in their seats, then came the tiresome details of the trial, tiresome to all, except the badgered witnesses, the cunning lawyers and the pale-face man who sat in the prisoner's box, on trial for his life.

Upon the prisoner's side the first witness produced was his wife, who testified that, on the night of the murder, her husband had accompanied her to her father's house, and had remained there until after twelve o'clock, and clearly stated that it was five minutes past twelve before he had left the house to go home to their own dwelling. Dominick's wife's father, Christopher Walebone, fully corroborated this statement, as also did his daughter, Penelope.

Now as Mickey Shea had positively sworn that he and the prisoner at the bar, George Dominick, had embarked from the foot of Market street, between eleven and half-past eleven, and had emphatically declared, in answer to a question from Counselor Watt, that "But where?—that is the rub. I wonder if he has ever been through my hands?" It is not often that a face escapes me, and I am sure I have seen this one before; the eyes and hair, the peculiar shape of the face; oh, no! there is no mistake. I have met this gentleman, but hang me if I can remember the circumstances!"

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Then the counselor brought up four doctors who had examined both the bed-post and the wound in Dominick's shoulder, and they fully testified that it was their belief that the wound could have been inflicted in such a manner.

This strong testimony rather shook the evidence that had been given by two doctors, witnesses for the government, who had examined the wound in the prisoner's shoulder, and expressed their opinion that it had been inflicted by a spent ball, as described by Michael Shea.

And then the counselor paid his respects to the principal witness on the side of the prosecution. In a delicate way he drew out from him the damaging admission that he had been up to the Island three or four times; had also paid a visit to Sing-Sing, and even now was under heavy bonds to answer in an assault and battery case. Of course during the examination of Mr. Shea, there was an almost constant wrangle between the lawyers. One objected, and the other insisted, and half-a-dozen times the Judge was obliged to interfere in order to restrain the ponderous counselor, and keep him within the bounds prescribed both by law and courtesy.

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Then the Judge reviewed the case. He clearly showed, how easily an *alibi* could be proven even in the most desperate cases. He did not attempt to attack the credibility of the witnesses for the prisoner, but simply related the history of an English case when a prisoner had established an *alibi* by witnesses who swore as to his being in a certain place at a certain time, and how the prisoner had cunningly tampered with the clocks before the commission of the deed that he was accused of on purpose to prove an *alibi*, and so, on the evidence of innocent but deceived witnesses, he nearly escaped the punishment due to his outrage of the laws; and as to Mickey Shea, he simply described the man who had fled the power of the law, and, terrified by the weight of its iron hand, had tremblingly come forward to do one act of justice; had surrendered himself, bound hand and foot as it were, to the vigilant janitor. "What is that you have there?" she continued, noticing something in the hand of the negress; "is it the gentleman's card?"

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"I never meant to hurt him. 'Twas only a jest. See, he revives."

In fact, father Francis, at this juncture did revive and struggle up into a sitting posture, when he leaned his head on his knees and groaned. The castellan saw that he had made a great mistake in his passion. He tried to remedy it the best way he knew.

"I'm sorry to hurt thee, father," he said, awkwardly; "I will send a flagon of good wine to your cell, and you shall be well nursed by lady Bertha. Come, girl, help him away, and you can go where you please, all over the castle. I can't say more than that I'm sorry, can I?"

Father Francis rose feebly and stood, with Bertha supporting him, looking at the knight.

"I think you are, my lord," he said, quietly.

"Come, my child, let us go."

And without another word he tottered from the room, while a low murmur of sympathy rose up from the crowd faced outside. Sir Wolfgang turned angrily round and faced them all.

"What are you groaning about, fellows?" he said, sulkily. "Did you never see a broken head before? Get out from here into the castle yard and stables where ye belong. Out, I say!"

The retainers slowly and sullenly dispersed, and Sir Wolfgang returned to his great chair, to brood over the news he had received.

"They must die," he muttered; "they know too much, both of them. Who would have thought the little creeping cat had got so much spirit? She looked so much like her mother then. Send to the emperor? She'll find it hard to get there, unless she can fly from the battlements, for all the air she takes shall be there henceforth."

He sat brooding for some time thus, when Red Max entered the hall and approached him.

"What is it, Max?" he asked, peaceably enough now.

"The baron of Ritterschloss has sent you a letter," said Red Max; "here it is."

"Where's the messenger?" demanded the castellan, taking the letter, which, however, he did not open.

"He's in the court," said Max, "along with a herald."

"Send the herald here," said Sir Wolfgang; "he can read."

Not a man in the castle, except father Francis, could.

The herald soon entered the hall in his green tabard, with the arms of Ritterschloss in gold on the breast.

"Canst read, herald?" demanded Ernst.

"If so, read this. My clerk is sick to-day."

The herald took the folded parchment and read the letter thus:

"To the Baron Wolfgang von Ernst, greeting:

"Dear cousin and comrade, we send you herewith the news of the most gentle and joyous tournament that ever was held. The new emperor, whom we all thought was going to be a good boy, and stop our privileges on the Rhine, has turned out to be a good comrade. He has proclaimed a great tilt and tournament at the city of Nuremberg to honor his institution of a new order, the Knights of the Crosicorde. He and his knights will await all comers there, for three days from the last of July, and maintain the lists if they can. I am going, and so is all of our league. We depend on you to tilt against these Crosicordians. They are said to be good knights, and the emperor is Grand Master of the order. Send word if you will come."

"Yours in the league, RITTERSCHLOSS."

"I will be there," said Sir Wolfgang, joyfully. "Tell the baron that I will join him before Nuremberg, and that we will take every lance upon the Rhinebank, if we can get them together in time. I shall have one good eye by that time, and I may meet him."

The herald departed, well pleased with a liberal guerdon from the robber-knight, and Sir Wolfgang went to his chamber to sleep, since he could not hunt or fight till his wound was well.

### CHAPTER VIII.

#### THE MIDNIGHT MARRIAGE.

FATHER FRANCIS lay on his pallet in his little cell, and Bertha watched beside him. The poor friar suffered intense pain in his head, and the young lady was the only creature in the castle that attended him. The men below, so ready to grumble at their master's brutality, were not so ready to help its victim, where help involved trouble.

It was night, and the cell was illuminated by the light of a small swinging lamp, which shone out of a low door on the stone balcony outside, that overlooked the river. Father Francis' cell was in a remote tower, known as the Falcon's tower, built on the summit of the rock where a pair of peregrine falcons had once made their eyrie. It was far from the donjon-keep where the great hall was, and only communicated with the rest of the castle over the battlements of the curtain. Bertha occupied the whole of the lower part of this tower, her sole privilege being that of quiet possession of those rooms. Sir Wolfgang never made his appearance in that part of the castle for some reason or other.

The lowest windows all looked out on a sheer precipice, about two hundred feet deep; and the idea of escape on that side was regarded as ridiculous. No one without wings or help could have got down.

In the middle story was father Francis' cell, and here sat Bertha by the pale lamp reading aloud in a bairnian to the wounded priest.

"O! father," she said at last, laying down the book; "it seems as if our only comfort now was in reading these holy words of the church. Does not your head feel better, now?"

"A little, child," he answered, faintly.

"Give me to drink, daughter, if you please."

Bertha handed him a cup of water, and he drank with feverish avidity. Just as she was

replacing the cup, a sharp tick came on the lintel of the outer door, and down dropped an arrow, with several chips of stone, on the floor of the cell.

Bertha started, and so did father Francis. But the strange part of it was, that the girl did not scream, but blushed instead, deep crimson.

"I knew he would come," she murmured, softly, as she looked at the arrow on the floor.

A spiral strip of white parchment seemed to be wound around it from heel to point.

"Who—who has come?" asked the friar, nervously.

He knelt there in the full light of the moon, and she stood before him. Neither touched the other, so much as with the tips of the fingers, but gazed into each other's eyes. Both his hands were clasped together, and hers were up, half hiding her beaming face. Shy, proud, delicate, and yet tender and loving, this virgin soul was not frightened by so much as a look of passion from this knight of courtesy. He knelt as he might at a shrine. She stood, full of sweet shame and delicious fears, vague and formless, at being thus adored. She did not hear the soft step of friar Francis, who had heard the sound of voices, and stolen down stairs, full of fears for his innocent charge. The good friar stood in the shadow of the door, a silent and interested spectator of the whole scene.

"How can that be, daughter?" said the priest, wondering, "no human being could climb up the face of that rock."

"There is a legend," said Bertha, gayly, taking up the arrow and unrolling the parchment as she spoke, "that once on time this castle had a captive princess, and that the first Rudolph von Falkenstein climbed from below to the falcon's nest, and shot up an arrow to the lady's window. It is he! It is he!" she broke off wildly, kissing the precious letter. "We shall be free, yet."

She held the parchment to the lamp. It was a long, slender strip written in red ink. She read aloud:

"LADY BERTHA VON FALKENSTEIN.—The emperor has heard of your wrongs, and has sent me to avenge them. Look from the lower window."

ADELBERT.

"Good-by, father," said the girl, gayly; "I will tell you all about it when I come back."

"But, daughter," objected the priest, urged by his conscience, "your spiritual adviser ought to be present at your interview with a strange youth."

"Oh, father," she said, coaxingly, "remember your poor head. It is not safe for you to move about. Besides, he can not get in, you know."

The first Rudolph von Falkenstein got in, did he not?" said the priest, dryly, "and carried off the princess?"

"Yes, father," she admitted with a burning blush; "but then he brought up a rope-ladder, and Sir Adelbert would not do any thing like that, you know. Oh, father, don't try to move. You'll hurt your poor head. If he comes in I'll bring him up. Indeed I will. And your health is the first thing, you know, father."

The priest smiled faintly.

"Go, my daughter," he said; "I will trust the honor of the castle with you. Go, and return quickly."

Bertha was out of the room like a flash, brought up in perfect innocence by the friar, as she had been, she could not account to herself for her anxiety to hold this same interview without witnesses. She only knew that she had never seen any one half as handsome as Sir Adelbert, and that he had come as he had promised.

She hurried down the winding stone steps with nervous haste, ran to the lower window and looked out. This window, like the rest, was down to the floor, and had a stone balcony outside, from which Bertha leaned, the rising moon shining full on her beautiful head. She gazed eagerly down the precipice.

It was yet in deep shadow from the opposite mountains, but the light was slowly creeping down its rugged face, lighting up the crevices.

The foundations of the tower were cut out of the living rock, and not more than thirty feet below there was a projecting ledge that jutted out from the precipice just like a bracket or console, the famous platform of the old falcon's nest, now long deserted.

Then, for the first time, Sir Adelbert folded his bride in his arms, and Bertha thrived the first kiss her innocent lips had ever received since her old nurse had died, ten years before.

"Yes, Rudolph," she answered, gently; "you know I will."

"Father Francis," said the knight, turning to him, "will you wed two lovers who wish to be one forever?"

"Right gladly," said the father, heartily.

"Kneel down, my children, and not all the power of the empire can sunder you when I shall have spoken the words."

And then, in the dark turreted chamber above the Falcon's Nest, where the first Rudolph of Falkenstein won his bride, the knight and the lady were made one by the priest of God.

It was the morning of the tournament. At least a thousand barons, margraves, dukes and princes were assembled at Nuremberg, or encamped around the walls in the meadows.

The order of the Holy Crosicorde was, to be instituted by the emperor, and every one wanted to know what this Crosicorde was, and who were the knights.

At present all was a mystery, but the church of St. Lawrence had been appointed for the installation, and the Knights of the Crosicorde were to tilt against all comers afterward.

Of other knights there was an immense crowd, and at least twenty thousand men at arms encamped in the meadows outside.

The knight of Ernststein, with a black patch hiding his sightless left eye, now nearly healed, had come to the town as he had promised, with his train of spears, and along with his neighbor Ritterschloss.

All the knights of the Rhine League were encamped near each other, and around them were the knights of Bohemia, Franconia, Austria and others, who were closely attached to the new emperor.

At last, at ten in the forenoon, the bells clanged out merrily on the summer air, and the nobles began to stream toward the great church of St. Lawrence.

The people were compelled to stand outside, for the building would not hold such a crowd, and they formed a great lane to the door of the church, and watched the nobles enter.

All were magnificently dressed, and most were armed, ready for the tournament. A great eagerness was felt to see the vaunted Knights of the Crosicorde, and many a fierce ritter had taken his oath to overthrow them or die in the attempt.

So they stalked with a great clash into the church, and waited, standing on the stone pavement, for the coming of the procession. There were no seats. Every one stood.

At last the great organ in the choir burst forth into a triumphant flood of sound, and the priests and acolytes entered, chanting the *Introit*.

There was a great hush in the church, every one straining their necks to see what came next. Then there was a glister and clash of steel, and a file of armed figures emerged from the vestry door, and advanced to the center of the chancel, where they stood in front of the altar, with their backs to the people.

There were just thirteen figures all told, their armor exactly alike, and bright like silver. Every visor was down, and they wore no surcoats, so that there was nothing to indicate which was which. They stood in a line, with ptying tenderness on the trembling girl.

"Whatever you say, my lord, that will I do," she answered, bravely. "You are wise, and know best."

He kissed her brow gently.

"That's my brave Bertha," he said; "and now listen. I am going to leave thee to-night, little bride. But I will show thee how to escape if so be that need comes. From the Falcon's Nest to the ground is a ladder of wire, so fine that it can not be seen, strong enough to hold twenty men. Keep the rope that I came up by, and hide it in your room here. If need be, let yourself down to the Falcon's Nest, and thence you will find the way easy to the little shore of pebbles under the cliff. They think here that the river below is impassable, but you will find that it is not. Under a rock you will find a little boat, invisible from above, and nobody ever goes down to the water's edge here. The beach I speak of is only a little bay as it were, sheltered by jutting points. The boat runs on a rope all across the river. Pull on the rope and you will go across easily, and be in the woods on the other side. Then cast loose the rope, abandon the boat, and follow the first path you see before you. It will lead you to friends who will protect you."

Bertha listened attentively.

"Is that all, my lord?" she asked, timidly. "Will you go, and not even tell your wife your real name?"

Sir Adelbert paused.

"Bertha," he said, gravely, "do you mistrust me? Can you not leave me to tell that at the proper moment?"

He looked at her sadly. She hid her face in his bosom, and faltered:

"Yes, my lord—but I ought to know—it is not right that I should not know who my husband is."

"Listen, Bertha," he said: "I have a reason for not telling that name here yet. But to the good father I will whisper it, under the seal of the holy church. To know it now, before the end, would but make thee miserable. But in good time thou shalt. Will not my princess trust her Rudolph?"

"Well then, whisper it to father Francis," said Bertha, pointing a little, "since you won't trust me, and keep the secret."

"I will," said Sir Adelbert, smiling; "and father Francis, who has doubtless read it in his old studies, shall tell you the story of the Princess Psyche who feared to trust her husband long ago, and who paid for it dearly. Father Francis, come hither."

And the tall knight bent down and whispered a few words in the friar's ear. Father Francis gave a slight start and surveyed the other with astonishment.

"My lord," he said, respectfully, "your command shall be obeyed. I will watch over the lady Bertha unceasingly."

Sir Adelbert turned and folded his young wife in his arms, kissing her fondly.

"Farewell, sweet heart," he said; "remember that I am near thee always. Think of me, and love me, Bertha sweet. And trust thy Rudolph, princess mine."

She clung to him weeping a moment. The next, he had vaulted out of the window and was descending the rope rapidly to the Falcon's Nest.

He kissed his hand in farewell from the window, and Bertha watched the two figures descending the precipice by the invisible ladder to the stream below.

He knelt there in the full light of the moon, and she stood before him. Neither touched the other, so much as with the tips of the fingers, but gazed into each other's eyes. Both his hands were clasped together, and hers were up, half hiding her beaming face. Shy, proud, delicate, and yet tender and loving, this virgin soul was not frightened by so much as a look of passion from this knight of courtesy. He knelt as he might at a shrine. She stood, full of sweet shame and delicious fears, vague and formless, at being thus adored. She did not hear the soft step of friar Francis, who had heard the sound of voices, and stolen down stairs, full of fears for his innocent charge. The good friar stood in the shadow of the door, a silent and interested spectator of the whole scene.

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"O! father," she said, faintly.

"Call me not my lord," said Sir Adelbert,

still kneeling at her feet.

"I knew he would come," she murmured, softly, as she looked at the arrow on the floor.

"I am your knight, Bertha, it's not so?"

Bertha started, and so did father Francis.

"But the strange part of it was, that the girl did not scream, but blushed instead, deep crimson.

"I knew he would come," she murmured, softly, as she looked at the arrow on the floor.

"I am your knight, Bertha, it's not so?"

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Wynder having tightly bound both his limbs and his hands by this time, they compelled him to sit upright on the lounge. "You'll find her asleep, gentlemen. Take her away if you will. I confess to my part in the scheme—ho! it was rather cruel, wasn't it? But how could I help it?—I only obeyed orders to save my carcass from destruction. I am glad you are going to relieve me of the care of her. By Satan! I am more than glad—I rejoice! Take her at once."

"Tell me—ruffian!" said Varlan Crosier, picking up and donning the hat and cape which Thadis had appropriated, "is there any thing to eat in this outlandish place?"

"And to drink?" supplemented Wynder. "Hanged if I'm not almost famished! I feel somewhat chilly, too. These wet clothes. Captain—I told you I'd have an argue. Key, you beast!"—to Thadis, "is there food and drink around here anywhere?"

"Ay, plenty of both, gentlemen," replied the stabler, still whining, still affecting an overabundance of dread. "In that cupboard there will find wine and bread, and sweetmeats—they were brought there only yesterday, for Elise De Martine, who, I swear, is on the other side of the iron door, and who, I also swear, I am glad to know—you are going to release. She is more beautiful than when she was only seventeen years old, which was ten years ago. There's the food, gentlemen—help yourselves; you will find it very choice—and within himself: "By Satan! I hope you may choke! So, he has found Elise De Martine, eh, whoever he is? Ha! ha! ha! that is a good joke. Ho! I would give a hundred dollars if I dared to laugh. Ho!—and aloud again, as he sat immobile, and spoke in trembling way: "Look on the top shelf, gentlemen; the best wine is there. A rare brand it is—glorious!"

Wynder was already at the closet; a portable affair that stood against the foundation wall. While he hastened to set forth three or four bottles of wine, some cold, sliced meat, and a variety of rich cake, all of which was kept there for the use of Stella Bellerayon, Crosier seated himself at the table, placing the pistol within reach.

"Haste, rascal!" he snapped, thumping the table with his fist. "Sblood! I am 'most starved. Not a morsel since the afternoon of yesterday. See if there is something stronger than the wine. This fellow may have a private bottle of his own stowed away."

"Yours truly," returned Wynder, as he drew out a flat bottle labeled "WHISKY."

The two sat down to a tempting luncheon flavored by the sparkle and spice of excellent wine; and as Wynder crammed his capacious mouth, and imbibed freely, he twisted his snaky limbs around the legs of the chair, and helped himself to this and that and the other with the worm-like arms that darted out and in up to his chin.

Crosier became silent. They had not partaken of any food since noon on the day previous, and he forgot his voice for a while, curbed his impatience philosophically in seizing this opportunity to refresh the inner man.

"But, I say, captain," Wynder inquired, as a huge bite vanished down his throat, and he helped himself to the sixth slice of sweet yellow cake, "if this really is Elise De Martine, whom we are about to liberate, pray, what haugh! haugh! hang that last piece!"—tipping the bottle hurriedly, to wash down a morsel that nearly choked him—"Spf! haugh! what in the world are you going to do with her?"

"Why did I tend Alick Cassin at his death-bed? Why did I cross the ocean? Why have I consigned Jules Willoughby to his grave? You are an ass! Was it not that I might possess Elise De Martine for a wife?"

"Of course. Certainly. But, I mean, where are you going when you leave Willoughby? You won't stay here, you know."

"No. This man who calls himself Colonel Paul Gregor will return shortly."

"In which event he will find his captive gone."

"Rascal! why do you persist? Yes, he will find his captive gone, and if this fellow," rolling his eyes toward Thadis, "hears our plans, we will be pursued. Blockhead! be still!"

"Oho!" thought the stabler, "he has crossed the ocean purposely to secure Elise De Martine? And he has buried Jules Willoughby, who, it appears, has been let loose since Alick Cassin has been dead—and this person—whoever he may be I can't imagine, since he is not Jules Willoughby, yet looks so much like him—tended Alick Cassin when he—the juggling apothecary!—died. He wants Elise for a wife?—and he thinks that she is concealed behind the iron door? Good. But will not the colonel have my life as forfeit when he finds her missing? By the horn of Gabriel! I am in a bad fix, and I can do nothing. And who, then, are these shrewd plotters?—how did they know there was anybody behind the iron door?" He tugged slyly at his bonds, striving to free his hands; but Wynder had tied the knots with an experienced turn, and the stabler's efforts only cut the flesh of his wrists.

"Now, Worth Wynder, keep a sharp watch on that villain, while I bring out my prize," said Varlan Crosier, rising at last and approaching the iron door, twirling the singular key which he had taken from the stabler's pocket; and he murmured, while his sickly face glowed and his serpent eyes shone:

"Oh, my Elise! So near to you—already I feel you in my arms, your sweet mouth touching mine—you kiss me—joy! joy! I am coming, coming, Elise. Oh, blessed accident that brought me here and to you!" fitting the key in the padlock, and vanishing into the secret apartment.

"No—accursed accident!" exclaimed Thadis, behind his teeth; "for I shall get a stab, or a bullet, or a broken head, from Colonel Paul Gregor before I am a day older."

"Now, my fine fellow," squeaked Wynder, who continued his attack upon the cake and wine with one hand, as, with the other, he cocked the pistol and moved it slowly up and down, with the frowning muzzle leveled at Thadis, "if you should possibly stir, I will fire. This pistol, I perceive," and here he peeked into the barrel with one eye, "is loaded half-way to the top. A shot from it would undoubtedly blow your head off—how unpleasant it would be to have no head on your body, eh? It has quite a large bore; and the bullet," looking with the other eye, into the barrel, "would seem to have been made for just such a thick skull as yours. Ha! don't move that foot again!"

"Point that another way!" cried Thadis, dodging his head, as Wynder aimed the weapon at him and grinned.

But we look into the secret room.

#### CHAPTER X.

#### CROSIER AND HIS PRIZE.

VARLAN CROSIER entered on tiptoe the silent apartment occupied by Stella Bellerayon.

The lovely woman was slumbering and dreaming on her soft couch, reclining there without having disrobed—a sight to tempt, like Batsheba, the passion of a king, and still whispering, unconsciously, the name of Jules Willoughby.

The beautiful picture, incased, as it were, in

the flowing draperies of the couch, and rendered both weird and heavenly by the colored rays of a swinging lamp which depended from the floor above, might well awe the beholder, the invader of so rare a sanctuary.

The intruder paused. The vision, as it met his gaze, woke all the keenest fires of his sensual nature, plunging his mind in territories of forbidden thought, and thrilling him with a nameless, momentary ecstasy. He stood riveted—a wild, eager, passionate stare in his kindling orbs, and his whole frame quivering in excitement.

For several seconds he appeared to be spell-bound, held in check by the presence of this transcendent being, stupefied by his own daring, hesitating in the sacred precinct of virtue and his dreams.

But he did not long remain thus. Advancing quickly to the bedside, he looked down upon the face of the sleeper, clasping his hands beneath his chin and seeming joyed to frenzy by his silent feasting.

"Elise!—my beautiful Elise!" he called; then he leaned forward and gently touched the bare arm, which he envied as it caressed her pure forehead.

The touch awakened her. She started up, frightened at the sudden interruption of her slumber, and the large, dark eyes flew open, basking in the light.

Varlan Crosier was kneeling and holding one of her hands; gazing eagerly up, raining kisses on that hand, which he pressed and toyed with in his own warm palms, and saying, huskily:

"Elise, Elise, my queen, my love! I have come to set you free. I am going to take you away from this vile tomb. I am your deliverer. Smile upon me, Elise; look kindly upon your admirer—who would root to the bowels of the earth after you—who would wade the corridors of perdition after you—who would snatch you from the angels of heaven, to possess you and make you happy. Glorious Elise! Speak to me with those lips of wine. Oh, my Elise!"

"Who are you?" interrogated the beauty, absently, drawing a hand across her eyes, as if not thoroughly aroused, and glancing wonderingly on the kneeling figure.

"I have come to rescue you from the villainy of Wilse De Martine," he answered. "No more silver serpents, no more deaths by drugs, nor burials, nor poisons—but liberty—freedom for you, my beautiful Elise!"

"Ah!" exclaimed the beauty, leaning closer and scanning his features, "this is some pleasant dream. My head aches queerly. I think I know you: you are Jules Willoughby, come at last. What made you desert me, Jules?—it was so unkind. Where did my messenger find you?" and she smiled forgivingly as she put the question which chid the supposed Jules Willoughby for deserting her in former years; which indicates that Stella Bellerayon, if she was Elise De Martine, or whoever she was, still clung to her affection for Jules Willoughby, who, at one time, it is plain, was her lover.

"Death on this infernal Jules Willoughby!" anathematized Crosier, mentally, but then a thought struck him: "Oh! she mistakes me for her old lover. I resemble him, it appears, and perhaps this may be of advantage to me, since he is out of the way. She is under the influence of that poisonous stuff, and dreams that I am he. Sblood! When she recovers her senses, as she assuredly will soon, she may discover her error, prove obstinate, and give me trouble. I will play upon her credulity. Ho! I will act the role of Jules Willoughby, and marry her as quickly as possible."

All this revolved in the mind of Varlan Crosier, rapidly as lightning flashes, and then he said:

"Yes, dear Elise, I am your own true lover, Jules Willoughby, who has been searching for you since you were drugged and entombed by your heartless father, Wilse De Martine—searching for ten years. I have been on the point of killing myself, year by year, in my despair. But, we will be happy now, eh, Elise?" You will go with me at once—go with your Jules—and be married, won't you, my beautiful, my adored Elise?" Adding, inwardly: "The devil has scored that lie against me, I am certain!"

"Yes, you are Jules. I know you, dear Jules!" said Stella, suddenly.

"Ho! She knows it? Good!" And to Stella: "Yes, my dear Elise, I am the miserable—your happy lover, I mean. Come with me."

"Why didn't you throw away that ring, Jules? Don't you recall, I begged you to sink it in the river, because she gave it to you?" She pointed to the curious, glittering ring on his finger.

"Ah, my dear Elise—my queen—I forgot, I will hide it at once. You shall never see it again. When we go out into the world, it shall be ground to dust"—tearing off the ring, and thrusting it into his pocket, while he marvelled: "Sblood! she has seen the ring before. Where did she see it? Could this ring have belonged to Jules Willoughby?—then he had two sweethearts, and the rival of Elise was the 'she' who gave it to him. I got the ring from the man whom Alick Cassin had shut up in the room."

"That's right," approved Stella. "You still love me, dear Jules. I hate that ring. You used to wear it on your left hand—now you wear it on your right? What became of her?"

"Devil take 'her'!" exclaimed Varlan Crosier, mentally. "Who does she mean by 'her'—it must have been some rival for the love of the apothecary's clerk. Sblood and fire! I wrung this ring from the left hand of the man whom I let loose at the command of Alick Cassin. She takes me for Jules Willoughby, and if the ring belonged to him, then the man I liberated was the accursed apothecary's clerk."

"She beckons me to come—no more blood, but peace—peace and love eternal. I will come—see! she is there amid the cloud, I come—wait."

With a stifled gasp his head sunk back.

Boone could not repress a shudder, for he felt that he held a corpse in his arms.

No more would the Wolf Demon carry terror to the hearts of the Shawnee warriors.

With their hunting-knives the two scouts scooped a shallow grave beneath the boughs of the hollow oak, and there, by the pale light of the dying moon, they placed the mortal remains of Abe Lark, the terrible Wolf Demon, the white husband of the Indian girl—Ke-ne-ha-la's daughter—"The Red Arrow."

The blood on Lark's cap was easily accounted for by the woodmen when they noticed a slight wound on the forehead of the body, made by some bramble in the madman's rapid flight through the forest.

Boone and Kenton returned to Point Pleasant, and great was the wonder of all when they learned who the Wolf Demon was.

The Indian expedition was abandoned. The death of the Shawnee chieftain broke up the proposed confederacy.

Winthrop and Virginia were married in due time, much to the disgust of Clement Murdock, who, shortly after, with Bob Tierson, emigrated to Kentucky, and there met his death at the hands of the Regulators for horse-stealing.

Boone bore her cross with resignation, and none guessed the love that was in her heart.

Our task is done. The strange legend of the Wolf Demon is ended. It is some six years since—with fishing-rod in hand—the writer explored the pleasant tract of country bounded by the Scioto, the Ohio, and the Muskingum; and he little dreamed then, when, in a rude log-hut, an aged hunter told the strange old Indian

me, dear Jules"—her tone and mien resuming their former gentleness—"you don't mean that? You do not care for Elise De Martine, do you?"

For a second, Crosier was dumbfounded. But again he thought:

"Malediction on that poisonous drug! She hates herself—she would kill herself if she were here! How pitiable. Her reason is completely gone. I could, with pleasure, strangle that so-called Colonel Paul Gregor!" And aloud: "Yes, I despise her, too, if you command me to do so! I hate everybody and everything that is distasteful to you, my beautiful—my—"

"Don't call me 'Elise'!"—quickly, and frowning. "My name is Stella Bellerayon."

"So it shall be, then: Stella Bellerayon—Bellerayon. Stella! Stella! Stella! Stella!"

"And will you take me out of here?" she asked, smiling upon him, and causing his heart to thump with delight. "How did you pass the trial of the Wolf Demon?"

"I moved so slow that the two in pursuit followed on the trail of the Wolf Demon."

The singular being pursued the same path returning that he had taken in coming through the wood.

He moved so slow that the two in pursuit followed him without difficulty.

Every now and then he halted for a moment and then again went on.

His steps became irregular. The hunters, following close behind, noticed that he was followed like a drunken man.

From side to side he swayed as he made his way through the forest.

He reached the little glade by the side of which stood the hollow oak.

"Let's attack him in the glade!" cried Boone, as he and Kenton reached the edge of the opening.

Clubbing their rifles, they did not dare to fire for fear of the report arousing the Indian village—the two scouts dashed into the opening.

Hearing the noise of their footsteps, the Wolf Demon turned, extended his arm as if to stay their progress, and then, with a heavy groan, fell sideways to the ground. The sudden shock burst the wolf-head from its fastenings to the body, and it rolled away from the prostrate figure.

The scouts halted in astonishment.

The wolf-head gone, the head of a man, covered with light, clustering curls, was revealed to their gaze.

Quickly they knelt by the side of the Wolf Demon and wiped the blood and war-paint from his face.

The superstitious fear of the woodmen was gone now, for they knew that it was a human form that lay extended on the earth before them.

The terrible Wolf Demon was dying. The tomahawk of the Shawnee had given him his death-wound. The strong limbs, once so powerful, were now made feeble by the near approach of that terrible mystery that human mind never yet has solved.

The two scouts lifted up the head of the dying man. His eyes opened slowly, and, with a vacant look, he gazed around him.

"Oh, what a terrible dream!" he murmured from his face.

The woodmen bent their heads, eagerly, to listen.

"It seems as if I have waded through a river of blood—fresh, warm blood, gushing, freely, from terrible wounds. I dreamed that I had been changed into a wolf, a beast with a human soul, and in that soul one thought only, vengeance on the Shawnee nation. In the light and in the darkness I sought that vengeance. The red braves fell around my path as the wheat falls around the reaper, yet I stand not my hand, for the cry went up for blood, rivers of it. On each victim I cut my mark, a Red Arrow, in remembrance of the wife that the Wolf Demon tore from me a year ago by the Muskingum. I was grieved with the culling of the maniac, for at times I am mad. The wound on my head, that I received from a falling rafter on that fearful night when my wife was killed, affected my brain. In my madness I must have dreamed all these terrible things. Dreamed that I fashioned myself a wolf-skin like a wolf, and then struck down my foes. A hollow oak in the forest was my home; there I concealed my wolf-skin when my mad-fit was over. Oh! it was a terrible dream."

Boone and Kenton exchanged glances; they knew that the dream was a reality.

Then the eyes of the stricken man, glaring around him, fell upon the strange disguise that covered his person.

"What is this?" he cried, in horror; "the skin of a wolf!" Then it is not a dream! No, I see all clearly now; the near approach of death has cleared my eyes unto the truth. In my madness I have been like an avenging angel to the Shawnee nation. I see their tall forms around me now—mascotines—warriors—the tomahawk cut is on their skulls, and on their breast is graven in lines of warm blood the emblem of vengeance, the Red Arrow!"

Exhausted by the outburst, his head sunk back upon the knee of Boone.

"Heaven have mercy on your soul," said the rough old Indian-fighter, solemnly.

Kenton turned his head aside to brush away a tear. He had seen many a death-scene, but none like this.

Again the dying man raised his head. A soft light now gleamed in his blood-shot eyes.

"I see you," and he extended his hand feebly toward the thicket. Kenton and Boone looked in amazement, but they beheld nothing. The sight was visible to the eyes of the stricken man, alone.

"See, she beckons me to come—no more blood, but peace—peace and love eternal. I will come—see! she is there amid the cloud, and on her breast is graven in lines of warm blood the emblem of vengeance, the Red Arrow!"

"See! she is there amid the cloud, and on her breast is graven in lines of warm blood the emblem of vengeance

## A MOVING TAIL.

BY JON JOY, JR.

When I was quite an infant boy,  
More than three years ago,  
To pasture did I drive the cows.  
And Brindle was quite slow,  
She always seemed to lag behind,  
Which interfered quite much  
With kitten and marbles, tops and balls,  
And other games like such.

One morning with a host of play to do,  
I caught her by the tail,  
All to accelerate her speed,  
When straightway she made sail!  
So sudden did she start to run  
I could not well let go  
Lest I should turn somersets  
And become extremely slow.  
Away she ran, and fifteen feet  
I took it every leap.  
It was as much as I could do  
Straight up and down to keep.  
So fast she went along the lane  
I'll willing be bound,  
I made two dozen turns in air  
Before I touched the ground.

"What, what?" cried old Brindle, stop!  
Old Brindle soon if you who?  
And I'll let go of you, old cow,  
If you will let me go!"  
Right by the old grist-mill we flew:  
"I'll stop, I'll stop, Rime!  
"Why don't you check this animalie?  
Pull harder on the line!"

We didn't stop, but we sped,  
And out the widow-queasie  
Ran, crying wildly, "Soak! soak! soak!"  
And, "Lors a mucky sakes!"  
Right past old Carson Miggs we flew,  
The fast as lightning.  
"So!" cried that reverend gentleman,  
But she, she wouldn't "so!"  
My hat flew off down the lane;  
The people said they went so high  
They were quite lost to view.  
Old fashioned was the gate  
And waved his hand, and said,  
"Young man, there isn't any use  
To try to get ahead!"

Now I began to touch the ground  
Once every fifty feet,  
And Brindle galloped wildly on  
Bound in this race to beat.  
Oh, I'll stop, I'll stop, I'll stop in grit,  
In pain I cried that "Twenty men  
Could not do that, you know!"

But I held on, for really  
I nothing else to do;  
She turned and jumped some fences, and  
Came back again, too.  
At last, as nothing have an end,  
I got a wifly pitch  
Through somersets I turned alop,  
And landed in a ditch.

## Strange Stories.

## THE RED COLUMNS;

## The Gamester's Oath.

## A LEGEND OF VENICE.

BY AGILE PENNE.

THE decree had gone forth, signed with the great seal of the State, that from that day forth no games of chance would be permitted to be practised within the limits of the city, over which floated the broad banner, bearing the Winged Lion of San Mark.

All the bloods of Venice were aghast; loudly they murmured at the harsh decree, and swore good round oaths that the Doge, Domenico Micheli, must be made to issue such an edict.

But it had been issued, and was to be enforced.

The grave fathers of the sea-washed city, queen of the Adriatic wave, feared lest by luxury and vice, the vital force of their republic, their young, brave and hardy nobility, would be corrupted, and so, after long debate, Dame Fortune's minions were bid to flee and seek for harbor elsewhere.

Venice then was at its topmost height of her prosperity. The crusades were over; no city in Lombardy could compare with her in wealth or strength;

"Her daughters had their dower

From spoils of nations, and the exhaustless East.

Pour'd in her lap all gems in sparkling showers."

In the grand square of San Mark stood a group of young nobles, busily engaged in discussing the astonishing edict.

"It is a bitter shame!" cried a tall and handsome gallant, who seemed to be the leading spirit of the group. "Are we children that the Doge shall say whether we shall risk our ducats or not? I ween that he has forgotten how we young gallants periled life and limb in the service of the republic against the Turk."

The speaker was called Enrico Faletri; by birth second to none in Venice; in wit and courage with hardly an equal in the city. A man of great talents; renowned for his skill in the art of war; famous for his cool judgment in the time of peace; as skillful with the pencil as a painter's favorite; gifted with the talent to use the sculptor's chisel, and possessing most wonderful genius for all the details of the architect. One fault only had Enrico, a love of play. No votary of the fickle goddess Fortune as constant as he. From vespers to early mass, all night long, the gaming-table held him captive. Other gallants would glide over the moonlit waters, in the evening hour, and wake the soft echoes of the night with a lute as they sung the praises of some fair lady beneath her lattice window.

Not so with Enrico; no fair-faced damsel for him, as long as he could win or lose the golden ducats. There was more music in their metallic ring, as they clinked upon the table, than in the sweetest laugh of the fairest lady that ever shone on.

"I suppose as it is the law we must submit," quoth another of the knot of loungers.

"Not I; by the four bronze horses of San Mark, I swear it!" Enrico exclaimed, hotly.

"Come to my palace, by the canal Orfano, tonight, and you shall see the gold chink as merrily on the board, as ever. No, gentlemen, believe me, the Doge will never be able to enforce his edict. As easily could he raise yonder red columns, and place them as he intended before his palace, the one crowned by the Winged Lion, and the other with the statue of our patron, holy Saint Theodore. That task he has not accomplished, nor will he succeed in this. When the columns are up, then gaming may stop in Venice; not before."

The speaker referred to two massive columns of red granite, which had been brought from the East by one of the Doges as trophies in the year 1125. Fabulous sums had been offered by the Doge to any architect who should be able to erect them, capped by the statutes spoken of by the young soldier. But not a man possessed genius enough for the task, although at least a hundred skillful men had essayed the effort. At last, in despair, the Doge, with the consent of the Senate, had made proclamation that he would grant any reward that might be asked to the man who succeeded in erecting the pillars. But, as yet, the genius capable of solving the problem had not appeared.

The group of young men soon after broke up, and within an hour it was known throughout

Venice that the reckless Enrico intended to defy the edict of the Doge.

True to his word, the young noble entertained his friends that night, and after the wine-cup had passed freely around, the company began to wot the goddess, Fortune.

Not an hour had they been engaged in play, when a trembling servant rushed into the room and made the startling announcement that the soldiers of the republic had entered the house.

The first thought of the hot-headed young nobles was to resist the intrusion; but the Doge had foreseen that such might be their action, and so he had dispatched such an overwhelming array, that even the rashest could not deny that force was fruitless.

In the damp and gloomy dungeons of the Carceri, Enrico Faletri and his friends slept that night.

In the morning they were all brought before the Doge in the Council Hall of the palace.

Silent in speech and stern in manner was the Venetian ruler.

Briefly he informed the rash young men that the law of Venice read alike to the slave and to the noble. What was forbidden to one, the other could not enjoy. But in this matter, believing that the wrongful act was more the result of thoughtlessness than of willful design to evade the law of the republic, he should therefore assess a fine of a hundred ducats upon all except Enrico Faletri; but for him, the giver of the fete, a fine of a thousand ducats, and three months' confinement in the arsenal he should impose.

Enrico was hot with rage, but not so blind with passion as further to enraged the Doge by any hasty act.

The fines were paid, and the imprisonment was over.

Enrico walked forth a free man, and greatly altered too, for the joyous smile common to his face was gone, and a sullen, melancholy expression had taken its place.

Each day of the three months, that he had spent in the confinement of the Arsenal, he had cursed the Doge and the Senate of Venice, morning, noon, and night; and a thousand times at least, he had sworn to be avenged for the slight that had been put upon him.

"By the Winged Lion, I have it!" he cried, excited, as he looked upon the trophies of Venetian prowess.

After that night Enrico was seen no more in Venice for a good six months. He had gone abroad for study, so it was given out, and many marvelled at the idea.

Six months and Enrico Faletri stood again in Venice; straight he sought the Doge in the Council Hall amid the Senate.

Kindly Micheli welcomed the noble, for he had won his worth, and wished to remove from his mind the remembrance of his offense and punishment.

Straight came Faletri to the point he wished.

"To the man who will erect the two red columns of granite now lying on the Quay, and crown them with the statues of the Winged Lion and Saint Theodore, you have promised whatever reward he may ask."

"Such is the truth," replied the Doge, wondering at Faletri's words.

"I will essay the task," the noble said.

The Doge and the wise men of the Senate stared in astonishment.

"And if I perform the task will you grant the reward I ask?" the noble continued,

"Most assuredly," replied the Doge, and the Senate confirmed the words.

Faletri at once set to work. Strange devices of ropes and beams he had brought with him from abroad, and it was evident that, during his absence, he had studied deeply in the architect's lore.

The grave fathers of the sea-washed city, queen of the Adriatic wave, feared lest by luxury and vice, the vital force of their republic, their young, brave and hardy nobility, would be corrupted, and so, after long debate, Dame Fortune's minions were bid to flee and seek for harbor elsewhere.

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Not an hour had they been engaged in play, when a trembling servant rushed into the room and made the startling announcement that the soldiers of the republic had entered the house.

And to him, in exchange for the humble adoration he gave her, this queen of women had promised her love, had plighted her faith; and Max felt the loud, fast beating of his heart.

With a sudden little gesture of weariness, she laid aside her crayon, and walked to his side, on the little azure and pink damask sofa.

"I am afraid the 'Battle of the Roses' will make me longer than I anticipated, especially as I will have to hunt up a model for one of my warriors."

Her smooth, exquisitely modulated voice fell on his ears like music. He made room on the sofa beside her, glancing down the long room at a quiet, graceful little figure in the bay-window.

Crystal followed his glance, and smiled eyes.

"My amusement, my darling! when you know that I am in paradise when you are at my side. As you say, your sister is content with her books and flowers, while I, with you, am more than content."

Crystal smiled indulgently.

"Oh, Max, what a fond flatterer you are growing to be! But, tell me, who is to be my bold warrior?"

A dark flush surged over Llewellyn's fair face.

"I thought—didn't you say—couldn't I—

A merry little laugh, silvery as a bell, preceded Crystal's answer.

"You darling ignoramus! as if my model must not be a martial-looking, splendid man, with dark hair, eyes, and a commanding presence, that shall inspire me. Like—like Julian Engle, you know."

She darted him a sidelong glance from under the waving fringes of her bright blue eyes. Doubtless she had anticipated an unusual effect of her words; but she was utterly unprepared for the perfect gust of passion to which he gave vent.

"Julian Engle! Julian Engle sit to you, to you, my treasure! He will come between us just as surely as darkness shuts out the light! Crystal, my darling, I cannot permit this; I dare not have him here, day after day, feasting on your beauty, and with his own teaching to forget me!"

Her blue eyes had a feverish glow, and he had sprung from his easy, reclining position, and stood in a strangely mingled passion of menace and entreaty, directly before.

Her own eyes, blue as the June sky, glowed with a faint red gleam; her cheeks had flushed like a moss rose, but her voice was perfectly even and low, and sweet in her answer.

"I am sorry, indeed, Max, that I have so unfortunately aroused your unnecessary jealousy.

Her tones were a little firmer, a trifle indignant, and just a little less sweet when she finished her remark.

He, all contrition, raised her hand and pressed it against his mustache.

"You wear the badge, but I am the slave.

Only—do you love me, Crystal?"

She smiled slowly; then the smile developed into one of her own melodious laughs.

"You unreasoning boy! you know well enough without answer. Hark! Laurie, did you say some one wanted me?" Then, to Llewellyn, lightly—"Good-bye, Max; one of my patrons is come."

She gilded over the grass-green carpet, her white trailing dress making a soft rustle as she went. And Max watched her, with a heavy, nameless pain around his heart, then, with a curt bow, to Laurie Vandeline, left the studio.

The "Battle of the Roses" was fought; at least Crystal Vandeline had just put it all on canvas, only that now, when there was no need for any more retouching, when there was no more possible need of Julian Engle's coming to paint it, she had the studio to herself.

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